

Habitat for Humanity Vice President Hugo Martinez, left, and other board members Joe Escobedo and Melissa Guerra accept a \$1,000 donation from Southern Sanitation President Roberto Treviño, right, Tuesday morning at Gutierrez Elementary School. The event was a kick-off for the new aluminum can recycling program to raise money for Habitat



Photo by Andy Ellis | Laredo Morning Times

Habitat hopes to collect 75,000 lbs of aluminum

By **KIRSTEN CROW**
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While the construction of many new homes begins with a concrete foundation, a community-wide movement could lay the groundwork for a new Habitat for Humanity home with the collection of more than 75,000 pounds of aluminum cans.

"Normally houses start with a nail, or a brick, but in this situation, it starts with a can," said Hugo Martinez, vice president of the board of directors for Habitat for Humanity.

Community leaders kicked off a three-month campaign for the program, called Cans for Habitat, on Tuesday, optimistic it would encourage recycling while benefiting disadvantaged families.

The project aims to encourage organizations and community members to collect cans for Habitat for Humanity, then use the revenue generated from the sale

of the recycled materials toward the construction of a new home.

Included among organizations participating in the program are Habitat for Humanity, Laredo Independent School District, United Independent School District, City of Laredo, Laredo Entertainment Center and Washington's Birthday Celebration Association.

A new Habitat home costs roughly \$40,000 — or 70,000 to 80,000 pounds of aluminum cans, depending on the resale value, said Joe Millham, construction field supervisor at Habitat.

"We gather donations year-round, so this is a way of bringing in all the school districts and community to raise money in a different way of writing a check," he said.

Commissioner Jerry Garza, who spearheaded the project, said it's something that has never been done before in Webb County.

"This is one way the entire community can get involved," he said. "All you really have to do is

collect aluminum cans."

The City of Laredo may also soon be pitching in on the project: Councilman Mike Garza requested to place an item on the Laredo City Council agenda to donate three months of aluminum cans or the revenue generated from the city's recycling program to Habitat, which would amount to about \$2,600. He said it could catalyze a "surge of participation."

The project is already well underway — Roberto Treviño, president of Southern Sanitation, donated \$1,000 to the effort on Tuesday, and can collection has already begun, including 126 pounds collected at the Menudo Bowl.

Viky Garcia, special projects director at Habitat for Humanity, said there are a few available receptacles for the project that could be used in homes or businesses.

For more information on how to participate, contact Habitat for Humanity at 724-3227.